

LEGISLATIVE SUMMARY FOR:

JUNE 16, 1997

Office of Legislative Affairs
Room 5121 South Agriculture Bldg.
(202) 720-2771
For additional information contact:
Danny D. Sells
Douglas E. Williams
Douglas J. McKalip
Joseph R. DelVecchio (serving on detail)

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LAST WEEK:

EMERGENCY SUPPLEMENTAL FUNDING SIGNED BY PRESIDENT-

Late Thursday afternoon, Congress removed the provisions on the continuing resolution and other items which caused the bill to be vetoed, and offered a clean supplemental appropriations bill, H.R. 1871, which then passed in the House 348-74 and in the Senate 78-21. The measure was signed by the President as soon as it was delivered to the White House Thursday night. Included in the emergency supplement appropriations are:

- Emergency Watershed Program (EWP) \$166 million
- Emergency Conservation Program (ECP) \$70 million
- Floodplain easements - allows NRCS to fund up to \$15 million
- Tree Assistance Program for Small Orchardists - \$9 million
- Prohibits funding of Salmon Memorandum of Understanding

CONSERVATION RESERVE PROGRAM HEARING -

On Wednesday, the Forestry, Resource Conservation, and Research Subcommittee (Chairman Combest, R-Texas) of the House Agriculture Committee held a hearing on the Conservation Reserve Program (CRP). The hearing focused on the recent allocations announced by Secretary Glickman. USDA witnesses were Dallas Smith, Acting Under Secretary for Farm and Foreign Agricultural Services; Parks Shackleford, Asst. Director for Farm Programs, FSA; Tom Hebert, Deputy Under Secretary, Natural Resources and Environment; and Paul Johnson, Chief, NRCS. The hearing was well attended and most of the subcommittee members were present. NRCS and FSA received many compliments on their work during the recent CRP sign-up, including one from Chairman Combest, who said "I would like to thank USDA at all levels, from the Washington office to the county staff, for their hard work during the 15th sign-up". Most members felt that the EBI process worked as intended, but a few felt that there was room for improvement. Some concerns raised included perceived inconsistencies across political (state and county) borders, outreach to producers, and how air quality factored into the EBI. The subcommittee was assured that their concerns would be considered before the next CRP sign-up.

HOUSE BRIEFING ON BUFFER INITIATIVE -

Chief Johnson's presentation and discussion on the agency's conservation buffer initiative was well received by congressional staff on Friday. The briefing included presentations by Parks Shackleford, Asst. Director for Farm Programs, FSA; Tom Van Arsdale, National Council of Farmer Cooperatives; Robbie Savage, Association of State and Interstate Water Pollution Control Agencies; and Steve Capel, Virginia Department of Game and Inland Fisheries. The concept of utilizing buffers was positively received with the congressional staff encouraging success with the initiative. A briefing for Senate staff is being planned for the near future.

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THIS WEEK:

AIR QUALITY BRIEFINGS -

Environmental Protection Agency will brief the House and Senate Agricultural Committees on agriculture's role in air quality issues of PM10 and ozone.

June 16 2:00 p.m. 1300 Longworth Bldg.

June 17 1:00 p.m. 328-A Russell

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH - The Forestry, Resource Conservation, and Research Subcommittee (Chairman Combest, R-Texas) of the House Agriculture Committee will hold a hearing on agricultural research.

June 17 9:30 a.m. 1300 Longworth Bldg.
Federal, state, and private efforts

June 18 9:30 a.m. 1300 Longworth Bldg.
Public and private partnership efforts

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LOOKING AHEAD:

AMERICAN HERITAGE RIVERS -

The House Committee on Resources (Chairman Don Young, R-Alaska) will hold an oversight hearing on the American Heritage Rivers Initiative. The hearing will focus on the Council on Environmental Quality's request for comments published in the Federal Register on May 19, 1997.

June 26 10:00 a.m. 1324 Longworth Bldg.

CONGRESSIONAL RECESS FOR THE 4TH OF JULY-

The House and Senate tentatively plan to recess on June 27 and 28 respectively and return to Washington, D.C., early in the week of July 7.

AGRICULTURAL RESEARCH: REAUTHORIZATION - The Forestry, Resource Conservation, and Research Subcommittee (Chairman Combest, R-Texas) of the House Agriculture Committee will hold a hearing to review proposals on reauthorizing agricultural research.

July 16 9:30 a.m. 1300 Longworth Bldg.

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